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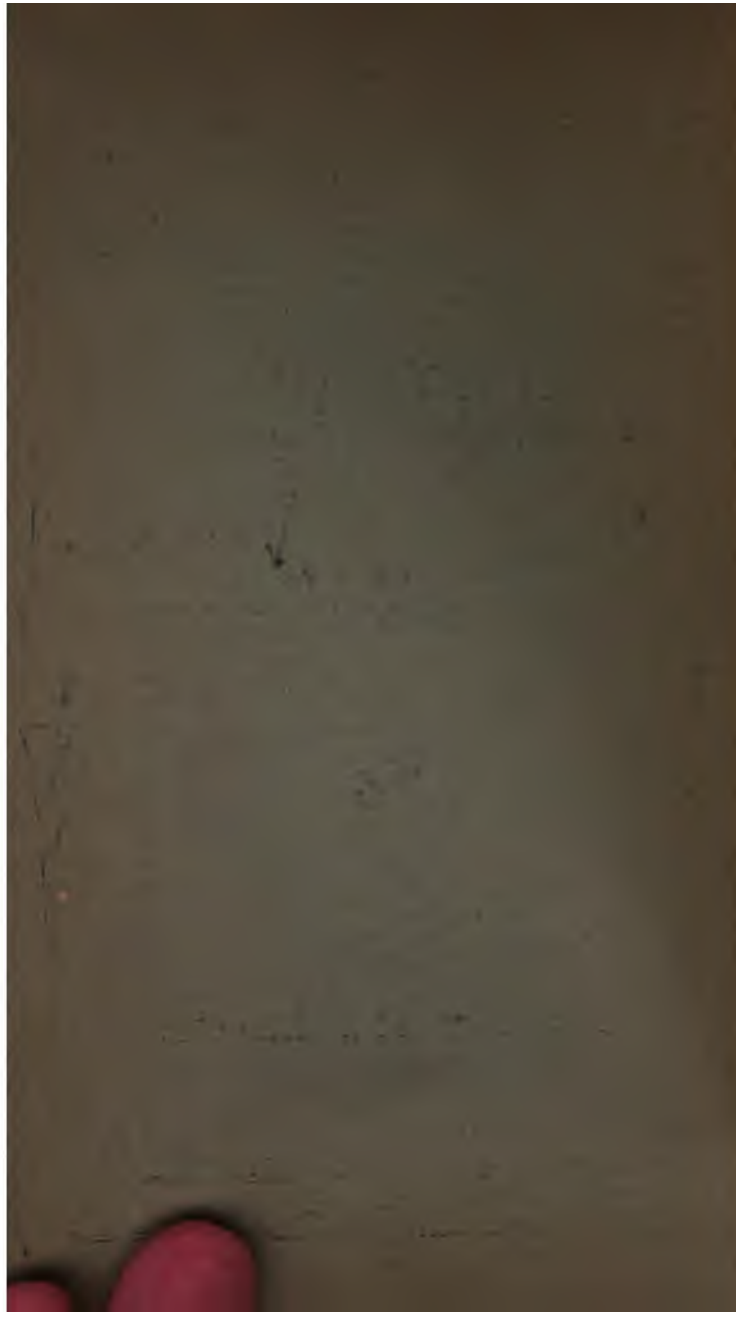
SEUMAS MacMANUS.



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Woman of Seven Sorrows

BY

SEUMAS MacMANUS

"Shiela ni Gara, it is lonesome where you bide,
With the plover circling over, and the sagans spreading wide,
With an empty sea before you, and b-hind a wailing world,
Where the sword lieth rusty, and the banner blue is furled."

—ETHNA CARBERY.

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Caraid mo ċléiḃ

7

Fior-ṁác ro-ġeanaṁail Ṡiġle.

Woman of Seven Sorrows

SCENE.

A highroad. Green fields, wood, lake, mountain, in back-ground. Road should run diagonally down stage from left corner back to right corner front. Shiela walking forward, wearily, on road towards left corner back, supported by Memory on her left, and Hope on her right. Hope may be designated by a star on her forehead, and a larger irradiating one on her breast, Memory by a halo.

SHIELA (*Halting*)—No farther may I go, O faithful handmaidens. My feet, sore-bruised and broken, have so stained the stony way I trod, that men may trace, by bloody footprints, all my long and woeful journeying. No farther may I go.

MEMORY—O Shiela, say not so—O! Shiela of the Sorrows though you be, who once were Shiela of the Glories.

HOPE—Ay, and Shiela of the Glories who shall be again.

SHIELA—Ah, sweet, sweet Memory! (*Kissing Memory*), and cherished Hope! (*Kissing Hope*), ye have been faithful servitors, and constant e'er, through all my weary wandering. My cheer, my stay, ye were. But for your loveful hearts, and loyal arms, I ne'er had come so far,—I, worn and weary, long ago had dropped despairful by the way. Now, now, alas, ye cannot bear me farther. (*Sits down by the wayside*). Here ye quit me. Fare you well, sweet Memory! (*Kissing her*), and Hope, strong-hearted, fare you well! (*Kisses Hope*)

MEMORY—Oh, never Farewell, Shiela.

HOPE—Farewell, never, never.

SHIELA—Loving, loyal maids, good-bye, good-bye!

MEMORY—Oh, never, Shiela. Would you then forget the pride, the glory, that was yours, ere yet the stranger entered your fair house, and turned you forth a wanderer?

SHIELA—My pride is humbled, my house crumbled, and thought of glories that were mine but gives me pain. I would forget! I would forget!

MEMORY—Forget the holy ones, who, kissed your bleeding feet, and forth to battle went for you—went forth, hearts bursting for their Shiela's wrong, and poured their veins' red sacrificial stream! Oh, Shiela would you then forget the holy Dead?

SHIELA—Ah, no! Ah, no! Ah, ne'er shall leave me fragrant memory of those loved ones long since gathered to the dead—the holy Dead who lived to love, who died in vain to save, me—died in vain.

HOPE—Ah, not in vain; their hero-life and holy death the courage gave that carried you thus far upon your way. And Shiela, see! see, yond, the end of all your weary wandering, a worthy throne awaiting you. See, see, dear heart, where you shall sit a queen again! (*Pointing towards Exit, left corner back*).

SHIELA (*Gives glance to left, and then shakes her head despondently*)—Ah, ah! kind Hope, brave Hope, 'tis a mirage that has oft before deceived these yearning eyes, and hurt this hungering heart. Oft on my woeful journey has it seemed, as now, but yet a little way; and I, though faint, and fain

to rest, ta'en heart again, and stumbled on, to find when next I looked 'twas far, and far—or gone. Dear Hope, it is a mirage.

HOPE—Mirage it is not, but real royal throne, where Shiela, all her travail o'er, and sorrowful no more, shall queen it regally. Take heart again, O Shiela!

SHIELA—O, Hope, dear Hope, would any own this way-worn woman, queen—this woman of the tear-stained face, and thorn-pierced feet, of wind-tossed hair, and garments rent and poor—would any own her queen?

HOPE—Yes, yes, ten thousand thousand hearts beat true to Shiela still, and love her all the dearer for her woes.

MEMORY—Can sons of Truth, prove false? Can children of the Faithful e'er abandon or betray? Can heirs of Glory traffic in dishonour?

HOPE—Be of brave heart, O Shiela! Sure yours despise you never for your lowliness. Among your own, you still are queenly queen; you still are loved, revered, adored.

SHIELA—If only it were so,—were so,—this breaking heart could joy again, these wearied feet would

nimble walk the flints, as though they trod on flowers: though woes might hail from Heav'n on Shiela, she could bless them, for never more would sorrow sit upon her brows.

(*Light snatches of song are heard from left corner back.*)

HOPE—Hark! hither Shiela's children come, the leal and faithful-hearted, to do homage to their queen. (*Puts arm affectionately around Shiela. Shiela lifts her head and looks to left corner back.*)

(*Enter richly and airily dressed girl, and fashionably attired young man. Hand in hand they trip down the road, flinging snatches of light song from them. Shiela sadly shakes her head and then drops it again dejectedly.*)

HOPE—Raise up your head and give your children greeting, Shiela.

(*Girl and young man only cast a casual glance at Shiela passing, and continue their airy, merry, lighted-hearted course.*)

SHIELA—My children might they be; my children should they be; but yet are not. Alas, they are

the children of the rich. They know not, never knew, poor, lowly Shiela!

(*Exit girl and young man at right corner front.*)

(*Ordinary love song, or drinking song, or soldier song, English style, is heard from left corner back.*)

HOPE—Thank Heaven, Shiela, all are not high-born—a humble one now cometh, and your own child surely.

(*Enter bright young man in top-coat, singing.*)

HOPE—He is not of the rich, O Shiela. Him you'll surely find a faithful son.

SHIELA (*Interestedly.*)—His step is bold, his face is bright, he is a child of Shiela's.

(*The young man advancing, still singing, carelessly throws backward his great coat, places hands upon his sides as he strides, displays English soldier's red coat.*)

SHIELA—(*With sudden cry of pain, laying hand upon her heart*)—O, God! the stab! (*Her head falls upon her breast, and she herself would fall forward were*

she not supported by Memory and Hope who clasp affectionate sustaining arms around her, and bear her up, while the young man, still singing, passes off.)

SHIELA—A jagged blade has pierced my heart; by hand of him who was my son, hard-driven.

MEMORY—Bear up, O Shiela I have balm will heal the wound.

SHIELA—The wound will never heal.

HOPE—The wound shall heal, and ——

(*Enter at left corner, back, professional man, or prosperous business man.*)

HOPE—See, O, Shiela, even here is one whose presence heals it.

SHIELA (*Slowly lifts her head, and looks wearily towards the comer. At sight of him her face brightens, her body becomes more erect.*)—Ah, yes, I know that face. He was a loyal faithful child in days long gone, and brought me loving homage. For years, sad years, I have not seen him—I thought him

with the dead—Welcome, welcome, loving son (*Spreading her arms*), whom I had reckoned lost!

MAN—Shiela, lost to you.

SHIELA (*Starting*)—What mean you?

MAN—I served you long.

SHIELA—You did.

MAN—I gave you all my youthful years, and all the fire a fond, if foolish, heart enkindled.

SHIELA—Youth's years, and fond heart's fire, you gave me.

MAN—And what was my reward?

SHIELA—Reward!

MAN—Reward?

SHIELA—Love, and the blessings, and the smiles of Heaven.

MAN—Poverty, the blows, and blistering scorn, of a contemptuous world.

SHIELA—My son!

MAN (*Raising hand in mild protest*)—Shiela, your son, no longer.

SHIELA—Who strove for Shiela when his heart was young, and strong, and prideful.

MAN—Who strove for Shiela when his heart was childish, very foolish, weak.

SHIELA—My grief! My grief!

MAN—When my heart was young, and weak, and very foolish, Shiela, I, forgetting self, gave you my days, and wasted wantonly life's energies, in cause both vain and idle, battling. When manhood came, I looked one day into my life, and found me without fortune, without friends, save people poor—as poor, and foolish, as myself—who lacked the world's repute. I vowed to heaven that day to be unwise no more. The talents I had wasted on your hopeless cause, then turned I to my own. Behold me now, a prosperous man with coffers filled, with friends in lofty place, and the world's esteem and honour. If duty-debt I ever owed you, sure though I should live to patriarch's years, I paid it seven-fold in those days, and scorn's foul finger dare not point to *me!* Shiela, farewell!

SHIELA—(*Slowly turning head; and looking after him with pathetic look, says slowly*)—Farewell!

(*Exit prosperous man, right corner, front.*)

(*Enter, left corner, back, pale-faced young man.*)

HOPE (*Putting arm around Shiela*)—Shiela, dearest Shiela, it is true the heart of him, the worldly one, is hardened, but the young impulsive heart, the poet-heart, it loves, and lives for, Shiela still—Shiela, behold! (*Shiela looks languidly towards the new comer; but when her eyes rest on him, they light up.*)

SHIELA—Ah yes, ah yes, this brave boy comes to aid of Shiela. Always I draw the young men's love. I love the young, for, ever, Youth and Truth go hand in hand, and Faith, and Love, and ardent bold Desire. This youth has loved and served me well. Welcome, loved boy (*stretching her arms*)! Your coming lifts a drooping head, and joys a heavy heart. Welcome! Sit at my feet, as you were wont, and chant brave strains to me.

YOUTH—(*Irresolutely pausing in front of Shiela, but still facing onward, speaks without looking in Shiela's*

face)—Ah no, ah no, Shiela, not now. (*Essays to step forward, but is halted again upon first step, when Shiela, in trembling alarm, speaks.*)

HIELA—Ah, no ? Not now ? Child of my heart, what mean you?

OUTH—(*Turning to Shiela*)—Have not I loved you, Shiela ?

HIELA—With the strong veins of a loyal royal heart, you loved me.

OUTH—Have not I served you ?

HIELA—Well, ay, well.

OUTH—Given you the flower of my days ?

HIELA—The flower of your days, white child, was surely Shiela's.

OUTH—Sung my songs to you ?

HIELA—Songs which soothed my troubled heart, and lit my dimming eye again. Songs which scattered clouds of doubt that darkened o'er me—shattered fell, foul, hosts woe rolled against my soul.

YOUTH—Offered my blood for you ?

SHIELA—Your blood for my sake you have tendered full a hundred times, white child.

YOUTH—May man do more ?

SHIELA—Child !

YOUTH—What has availed it all, O, Shiela ? All my songs, my service, love, the offer of my life ? What has availed it all ?

SHIELA—My heart's own child !

YOUTH—Shiela of the Sorrows—such I found you ; and though yielding you, through all the years now ended, of my youth, the service of my hand, my heart, my brain, and soul, but Shiela of the Sorrows you are still—the sharper, sharper Sorrows. Ah, upon a day when youth and childhood met for me—yon long-gone day !—a dreamful child, whose heart was pure as Boylagh's stream, when wandering in murmurous woods of Ardnawark, alone with whispering trees and singing birds, and all-pervading God, his soul o'er-brimmed with ecstasy, did rear his head, and lift his voice, and consecrate him

unto Shiela. Oh, a simple dreamful child was lost in Boylagh's woods that day. From out their shades a soulful youth, with brow of thought, and eye of fire, walked forth at evening. From that proud hour till this sad one, contemning laugh of friend, and sneer of foe, the world's despite and rankling pity, he kept his vow inviolate.——Now Shiela lift the vow, and let me go.

SHIELA (*Anguishedly*)—He raves; my heart's-child raves; or else I dream a dream heart-crushing.

(*Youth has stepped past Shiela as she speaks. Standing to her right he halts, turned partly towards her again.*)

YOUTH—The vow—O Shiela, lift it!

SHIELA—Child (*Extending her arms*). Come to my heart. You wander.

YOUTH—The vow!

SHIELA (*Beseechingly*)—Come, come. (*Anguishedly*). Nor heart nor brain, O child, acquainted is with asking of your tongue.

YOUTH (*Going on one knee and kissing the hem of her garment*)—O, Shiela, then good-bye!

SHIELA (*Arms stretched toward him*)—Oh, child!

YOUTH (*Retreating, but still partly turned towards her*)—Good-bye!

SHIELA (*Arms still outstretched after retreating figure*)—Oh, child! love you not Shiela?

YOUTH (*Shaking head with eyes downcast, and speaking slowly*)—Shiela, I have loved—*have* loved; and Shiela have I served.

SHIELA—And wearied in her service?

YOUTH—It is vain, 'tis vain. Oh I have done for Shiela all that man might do, and more than man should do—while fondest friends have named me fool—in vain.

SHIELA—Oh, child!

YOUTH—With sad heart, Shiela, now your service I renounce.

SHIELA (*Throws up her hands in despair*). Oh! Oh!

YOUTH—Unto myself I give my future years; the world is calling me—the great wide world—where

fame and fortune both await me. No fortune, Shiela, and no fame, are in your gift.

SHIELA—But love, and love, and love.

YOUTH—No fortune, and no fame. Yet had success but blessed my toil, I could have these foregone.

SHIELA—The crown of all success is love. I gave you love, love. Come to this breast, O child! for in my heart is love still inexhaustible.

YOUTH—Disillusioned, disenchanted, to the world I go, the world that offers fame—which Shiela, poor, cannot bestow on faithful children. Ah, to say it grieves the heart of one who loves you truly, but —Good-bye! (*He turns to go.*)

SHIELA (*With arms outstretched*)—Oh! Oh! Leave not this poor heart desolate! O, child, stay, stay with Shiela. (*He halts irresolute, head drooped, whereupon Shiela strains the ardour of her appeal.*)

SHIELA—Stay, stay, and heal a breaking heart.

(*Youth half turns, suddenly wheels round again, and covering his ears with his hands, rushes out as Shiela again appeals.*)

SHIELA—Oh stay, oh stay!

(*Shiela drops back, faint, and sobbing, in arms of Hope and Memory, who endeavour to soothe her.*)

MEMORY—Oh, oft before, fell hour as dark, dear Shiela. Oft before your heart was pierced; but the cloud lifted, the wound healed.

HOPE—Dry, dry your eyes, O Shiela, and lift up your heart; for, true as Heaven's above, will comfort find you, and deliverance.

(*Enter simple country girl shawled, and bearing a small bundle tied in a colored handkerchief.*)

HOPE—Now comes a loving child will cheer your heart.

SHIELA (*Looking up*)—Ah, Brigid! Yes, a loving child, and faithful ever—a mountain child, simple, sweet, and pure, and true. My heart's in Brigid—Welcome, Brigid (*extending her arms*). (*They kiss*). Welcome, Brigid. This sweet coming lifts a heart sunk low.

BRIGID—*My* heart is low and leaden, Shiela, and never more will lift—Good-bye! (*Proffering a kiss.*)

SHIELA (*Holding Brigid off*)—Brigid!

BRIGID—Good-bye!

SHIELA—What mean you, child!

BRIGID—Oh, Shiela, blame me not, nor pain ye more this breaking heart; but I must go—must go.

SHIELA—Brigid!

BRIGID—Must go. These aching eyes have looked their last upon the hills that cradled me.

SHIELA—Brigid!

BRIGID—Must go; must go, Shiela—I have torn my heart-strings, whence they rooted were around my father's hearth. Shiela, good-bye! 'Tis bitter, bitter parting!

SHIELA (*Arising*)—Brigid, do you leave me?

BRIGID—I go to win relief for parents crushed by hideous want.

SHIELA—Oh, do you leave me? Leave this lonely heart?

BRIGID—Across the cruel seas I take a lonelier.

SHIELA—This aching, breaking heart.

BRIGID—I bear with me a broken one. Sure Shiela, I have loved you e'er, and ne'er will cease to love, though years, and years, and half the world rise up between us.

SHIELA—(*Lowering her head*)—Yes.

BRIGID—And when, afar, I eat the stranger's bread, my flowing tears will keep it alway bitter.

SHIELA (*With head still drooped*)—Yes.

BRIGID—And though these hands be hired to him beyond, my heart will still be Shiela's.

SHIELA—Yes, oh, yes.

BRIGID—And when these hired hands busiest be for him who purchased them, my hungering heart will stray on Shiela's service.

SHIELA—Yes.

BRIGID—Your blessing, Shiela, and good-bye!

SHIELA—My blessing, yes—Pulse of my heart, unto the world's end bear with you your heritage of purity—sweet child, good-bye!

(*Brigid goes slowly forward with bent head, Shiela gazes pitifully after, till she has disappeared, then with a sigh drops to her seat.*)

SHIELA—The faithful go; my heart's wealth flows. Than all the herds on all my hills, and flocks on all my plains, worth more ten times a thousandfold, is heart of that poor mountain girl who now is lost for evermore to Shiela. Oh woe! my woe!

HOPE—Be brave, O Shiela.

(*Enter country boy with bundle under arm, and stick in hand.*)

HOPE—Look who comes here. His face bespeaks one faithful.

SHIELA—Michael! Oh, Michael is a faithful lad of simple earnest heart, and loves poor Shiela. Michael, welcome (*Stretches forth her hands. Michael gives her his two hands, retaining stick between finger and thumb of the left. Shiela looks*

into his eyes. Michael meets her glance with his, but after some moments of her searching gaze he drops his gaze upon the ground. Shiela is still retaining his hands.) Oh Michael, welcome welcome! I have pined for you. My heart is bowed with weight of woe. Aweary by the way, I grew; faith and footsteps failed me. I cannot further fare, unless by aid of some strong, faithful arm, fond son, like yours.

MICHAEL (*With eyes still downcast*)—Ah, Shiela, no! I may not tarry.

SHIELA—What, Michael!

MICHAEL—I may not tarry, Shiela, so (*lifting his eyes to hers*) good-bye!

(*Shiela's hands go to her heart, she drops her head.*)

MICHAEL—Shiela, forgive me,—I loved you ever, and shall ever love.

SHIELA (*Lifting her eyes again*)—But, why good-bye?

MICHAEL—I wearied of my crampêd life within the circling hills that gloomed our home; my hands

were wearied on the spade; my eyes were wearied watching e'er the ring that shut me in; my heart went weary yearning, yearning—for—I know not what. Young men left our hills, and wandered far, and sailed the seas, and after years returned with tidings strange of lands beyond where life is life, and hearts can never hunger. They told of cities fair, with spires and domes that glittered in the sun, and—gold, and gold, and gold! In nightly dreams, and dreams by day, I see those cities now. Their flashing domes, and glittering spires bewitch my soul, and stay I cannot. I cannot break the hidden power that draws me.

SHIELA (*Laying hold of his arm*)—Oh, Michael, Michael, leave me not heart-desolate.

MICHAEL—I cannot stay—Shiela, good-bye!

SHIELA—My mountain child, O Michael, for the love your child-heart gave me, stay.

MICHAEL—Shiela, Shiela, I must away!

SHIELA—Oh stay! Oh stay! I sorely need your arm so strong, your young stout heart.

MICHAEL—I cannot stay. (*Excitedly looking far away*) The spires, the shining spires, are beckoning me! The flashing domes are signalling my soul! Shiela, I cannot stay.

SHIELA—Oh, stay with me, and I shall pour a thousand blessings on your head.

MICHAEL (*His eyes fixed ahead*)—There life is life, and hearts can never hunger know. There glittering hours o'ercrowd the golden day? Yon world, is bright, and gay, and glad; and they who enter in, forever bid good-bye to sadness.

SHIELA—Oh, Michael stay, and you I shall enrich beyond the dreams of man. Heart-happiness, and sweet content, and holy peace I'll pour on you.

MICHAEL—Beyond is gold, and gold, and gold! I cannot stay, oh, Shiela.

SHIELA—With me is love, and love, and love! Oh, Michael stay with Shiela.

MICHAEL—(*Withdrawing himself from her clasp and going forward*)—Shiela, I love you and shall love. But life, and wealth, and joy, I now must know. Shiela, good-bye!

SHIELA (*Stretching her arms after him*)—Michael!

MICHAEL—Good-bye, Shiela!

SHIELA—Come back.

MICHAEL—Good-bye!

SHIELA—Come back.

MICHAEL—Good-bye!

(*Exit.*)

(*Shiela droops her head, and moans. Memory and Hope endeavouring to soothe her.*)

MEMORY—Oh, Shiela, Shiela, you knew days of Glory, ere—

SHIELA—Dear Memory, widen not the wound within my heart.

HOPE—On days to come—

SHIELA—Sweet Hope, the thought is anguish.

(*Enter man and woman with little child led between.*)

HOPE—E'en now may comfort come from very old,

or very young. Look up, O Shiela. (*Shiela slowly raises her head, and casts a glance at the comers. sighs, and droops it again.*) Speak to them, O Shiela, tell them of your woe.

SHIELA (*Without raising her head*)—Ah no, Ah no!

HOPE—Good people, oh, see Shiela weighed with woe.

MAN—Poor Shiela!

WOMAN—Ah, poor Shiela!

CHILD—Poor, poor Shiela!

HOPE—Good people, comfort her.

MAN—We cannot wait, alas!

WOMAN—Alas, we may not wait.

HOPE—You will surely pause to comfort Shiela.

MAN—We cannot, cannot. To the land beyond the seas our children went, and won red gold in plenty. We quit the struggle here, we leave the ill-roofed hut,

and niggard field, for wealth and ease that with our loving children wait us. For Shiela's sorrow we are sorely grieved.

WOMAN—Ay, sorely grieved.

MAN—And may not wait. Good-bye!

HOPE (*Extending arms after retreating figures*)—E'en leave the child with Shiela.

MAN (*Looking fearfully behind, and hastening child's steps*)—Ah no!

WOMAN (*Casting fearful glance behind likewise, and at same time hastening*)—Ah, no, no, no! Good-bye!

(*They go forward, and exeunt. Shiela moans. Memory and Hope endeavour to soothe her.*)

(*Enter, from right, tall lady, attired as Brittania, accompanied by a stout man of low or medium stature, they pause up stage observing the group.*)

HE (*Extending arm to hold his companion back*)—Ay,

here; she's here; and Hope and Memory strive in vain to lift her heavy heart.

LADY—Now, indeed, is happy time, since she is comfortless.

MAN (*Half wistfully*)—Ay, comfortless, indeed; this is the needed hour.

LADY—Then haste, make haste, e'er Hope her heart relieve, or Memory.

MAN (*Turning to her and extending his hands*)—The price! the price!

LADY—The price is here. Here's thirty pieces (*giving him purse*). Was not that the bargain?

MAN—'Twas the bargain. Thirty pieces.

LADY—Which is she?

MAN—Observe whom I shall kiss—that one is she. Stay here while I go forward. (*He advances before Shiela, kisses her feet, then throws glance at lady*). Oh, Shiela! Shiela!

HOPE—Welcome, welcome. Comfort Shiela.

HE—What grieves our Shiela so ?

HOPE—Her Children grieve her : some are thoughtless ; some are false ; and many rend her heart with their good-byes. Oh, comfort her. Sure you are faithful.

HE—Faithful, yes. To Shiela, faithful ever. Oh, Shiela lift your head, and greet a faithful child.

SHIELA—Will you, too, cross the seas ?

HE—I never shall desert you.

SHIELA—All blessings flow on you.

HE—To Shiela I have ever faithful been, and faithful shall remain.

SHIELA—God bless you then.

HE—I come to comfort you, and lift your drooping head.

SHIELA—Within your soul may comfort reign for aye; your heart droop never.

HE—I bring a strong one here, who yearns to aid, and carries consolation. (*Beckons to Lady, who thereupon comes forward. At sight of her Shiela sits erect*). Strong her arm, and warm her heart; long craved she to befriend you.

SHIELA—Her name?

HE—Her name is Might.

SHIELA (*Arising*)—Then I should know her.

MIGHT—You thought you knew me, but you knew me not, O Shiela.

HE—You thought you knew her, Shiela, but you wronged her e'er. Through love of you I wronged her too. My heart was filled with hate for her, because I thought she bore you malice. But, Shiela, oh, she loves you. She would see your dim eye light, and hear your mournful tongue rejoice again.

SHIELA—Twas she who forced me from my throne and set my feet upon the flinty way.

MIGHT—You knew me not.

HE—You knew her not, oh, Shiela.

SHIELA—With curse and goad her hirelings drove me on, and never let me rest—

MIGHT—You knew me not.

SHIELA—Through anguished years and years—long since their heavy count did fail me—walked I homeless.

HE—Oh, Shiela, she repents of it.

SHIELA—Then comes she to enthrone me ?

MIGHT—I come to you with good-will gifts.

SHIELA—Avaunt !

HE—O Shiela, hear a faithful child—could such advise you ill ? Oh, spurn her not. She sore repents the wrongful past, and now would make amends. Good-will she feels, and tokens of her good-will bears.

MIGHT—But curb your stubborn spirit, Shiela : deign to be my handmaiden. I yearn to have such

haughty servitor. Here, take these proffered hands, O worn one, (*Extending her hands*). An outcast's hands I'll take, and lift a lady up. Your bruiséd feet shall bathéd be with balm, and shod with golden shoon ; your weary limbs be soothed in silks, your brow be crowned with flowers. Your home shall be in echoing halls ; you'll couch on eider ; unending ease be yours, delight, and gold—all tongue may ask, or mortal hand bestow. Fondled, courted, and caressed, you'll be—the wide world's envy.

HE—Oh Shiela ! hear !

MIGHT—All this, and more, with glad heart shall I give. And no return I ask, save that you be my servitor in name—in name alone, Shiela.

SHIELA—O Woman! think you, you are speaking with a courtesan. These naked feet in golden shoon of yours shall sin against me never ; nor ever shall your scarlet roses shame this brow. Not all the silks of yours, and such as you, could purchase this poor way-stained garb. Your sounding halls, and couches lewd, I spurn. I spurn your guileful ease,

your guilty gold. I loathe your odious caressings. I'd rather cherish scorn of such as you, and walk the world for ever more with bruiséd bleeding feet, than reign a queen with mouth defiled by saying once, I SERVE YOU!

MIGHT—O Shiela, only—

SHIELA—Woman, dare you ask—nay dare you in presumption conceive such words the lips of one could utter, who walked a world-famed Queen, revered and feared, when you were but a serving wench, and shall be queenly Queen again, with princes from the wide world bending at her knee when you shall be a loathéd memory.

HE—O Shiela, hear a friend—

SHIELA—And though to-day I fare a pitied outcast on a barren world, poor, lonesome, and woe-stricken, disowned by those who owe me heart's devotion; my frame sore-shaken, and my soul weighed low with weight of misery; yet here stand I beside you in the flush of all your power, bespangled with your gems, bedecked with satins—here stand poor I

beside you—feeling Queen beside a beggar. Woman, begone!

(*Might retreats in dismay*).

HE—O Shiela, list a faithful friend—

SHIELA—Most miserable wretch take hence your presence foul. Go take from her the jingling, glittering, shame for which you pawned your soul, and gloat on it adown your shameful day. Begone!

(*He falls back, too, dismayed, arresting his retreating steps by the side of Might*).

MIGHT—You have not earned your money.

HE—Then, earned it soon shall be. Come lend your aid.

(*He springs towards Shiela, Might follows. He takes hold of Shiela's hands, bending them behind her back where he would pinion them*).

SHIELA (*Struggling*)—Unhand me, wretch. Oh traitor, traitor, and your mistress Might, unhand me (*Then crying aloud*). My children! oh my children! Is

there not one faithful left to succour Shiela ? Help, oh children, help ! Children, children, come !

MEMORY (*Waving arms, and calling aloud*)—Help, help ! Oh, is there none to aid? Will Shiela of the glorious days be bound in cords by Might and Treachery ? nor one of all she loved and cherished come to aid her ! Children brave of Shiela, haste, oh haste !

(*A rallying song,* "MO CHRAOIBHIN CNO" * *is heard from left*).

" A sword of light hath pierced the dark, our eyes have seen the star.
A ghradh geal, leave the ways of sleep now days of promise are ;
The rusty spears upon your walls are stirring to and fro,
In dreams they front uplifted shields—Then wake, Mo Chraoibhín Cno ! "

(*The first sounds of the song cause Treachery and Might to pause in their work affrighted. Shiela lifts up her head in*

* By Ethna Carbery. Mrs. C. Milligan Fox has set this (with all the other songs of Ethna Carbery) to music.

joy. Enter from left, marching, and singing in chorus, troop of little children, youth and maiden, artizan in paper cap and apron, bearing a sledge, and frieze-coated, poor countryman with sickle resting on shoulder; Treachery and Might both fly, and exeunt) The incomers sing down stage as far as Shiela):

"The Dead are blest, their *caoine* sung, our bitter tears
are dried;
We bury Sorrow in their graves, Patience we cast aside;
Within the gloom we hear a voice that once was ours
to know—
'Tis Freedom—Freedom, calling loud, Arise!
Mo Chraoibhín Cno!"

(*The little children cluster round the skirts of Shiela the others stand before her—or to either side semi-circularly*).

SHIELA—A thousand, thousand welcomes, children.

LITTLE CHILD—Mother, oh, we heard you call for aid.

ARTIZAN—We heard the anguished call of Memory.

SHIELA—A thousand, thousand welcomes, children. Now you lift this heart that never more methought, could rise again. I feared the faithful all were gone, and Shiela left alone to pine and perish.—A thousand thousand welcomes. (*Drops arms around clustering children on either side. Kisses upturned forehead of one*).

LITTLE CHILD—Mother, sure the little children's hearts are beating for you always. We are wishing night and day that we were men and women fit to fight for you or soothe you.

SHIELA—(*Kissing child*) Ay, ay, thank God, the little children's loving hearts are ever with me. May He bless you, children, may He keep ye true to Truth and Shiela all your days.

ALL THE CHILDREN—Oh Shiela, Shiela, we'll be always true.

(*They stoop and kiss the hem of her skirt*).

SHIELA (*turning to youth and maiden*)—My soul is proud when youth and maid still love me.

MAID—Mother, I am always, always yours, my heart of hearts is yours.

SHIELA (*Kissing her*)—The loyalty of maid in bloom, her sweet devotion, is offering fit for Heaven's own Queen. O sweet one, if your virgin heart and fragrant soul with Shiela dwell, no evil thing shall ever dare come nigh her.

MAIDEN (*Kneeling and kissing Shiela's garment*)—To you, to you, I give my days.

YOUTH—I give my days to Shiela, the service of my arm, my heart's devotion.

SHIELA—O noblest youth! Then Shiela's name shall be revered again.

YOUTH—My breast was torn for your distress; long time I suffered impotent. With manhood's fire my veins to-day are pulsing—this day to Shiela's cause my life I consecrate.

SHIELA—Then Shiela, sure, shall holy name the day that Youth, high-hearted, noble, full of fire, did vow him to her cause. God bless thee! (*Taking*

his head in her hands, and placing a kiss on his forehead)—Keep thy purpose steady as the star that pivots God's great universe. From this day strive for Shiela's wrested rights. (*Girds sword on him*).

ARTISAN (*Speaking for himself and poor countryman*)—Oh, Shiela, we—

SHIELA—Bring service. Yes, I wot that well. Oh man of rugged face, and toil-stained hands! your warm strong heart for Shiela always beat. That certain knowledge smoothed the rasp edge of my cruellest woe. (*Lays hand on his shoulder*)—Oh, strong and sturdy, honest, faithful one, your heart is finest gold. Your place shall be on her right hand when Shiela sits at royal festive board again. (*Then she turns to poor countrymen*)—And you, true heart, would that you knew your riches.

POOR MAN—In lands and cattle I am very poor—

SHIELA—In lands and cattle—all things of a day—you're very poor; but rich beyond a miser's dream in those that last for ever. Your coat is old and faded, but clothes a shining soul—is shabbed and

poor, but yet the heart it hides could not be purchased with the gold of Spain. Your cabin on the mountain bleak is poor, and lowly, wind-swept, but its hearth is warmed by fire from Heaven; its roof-tree hallowed for that, underneath, poor Shiela, homeless, found a home, was cherished, and her bruises healed, and sent forth strong again. Through all your days, poor man, rich man, be God with you, His presence reign beneath your holy roof-tree. Shiela loves and blesses you.

Now my heart is strong, new blood is leaping in my veins, my limbs are lithe, my tired feet ache no more, Oh children, children, faithful ones, I now may claim my own. Now that she knows her children sweet, and youth and maid, and they the world call poor, are with her, Shiela lifts her drooping head to greet the smiling skies, and sets her feet upon the pleasant way that leads unto her heritage. Come Hope, (*Putting an arm around Hope*)—Oh, you shall reign a queen in my domain. Beside my throne your throne shall be in people's hearts. And Memory come—(*Putting arm around Memory*)—Oh blessed, glorious, Memory! your brave name shall hallowed be. Come, children, come! At last, at last, all

tortures past, all anguish o'er, all agony behind, at last, O God! goes Shiela forth to claim her own again.—(*Children have fallen in in front; youth and maiden, countryman and artisan behind; the procession moves down stage singing verse from "Mo Chraoibhin Cno."*

"*A Ghradh Mo Chroidhe!* We yet shall win a gold crown for your head,
Strong wine to make a royal feast—the white wine and the red—
And in your oaken mether the yellow mead shall flow,
What day you rise, in all men's eyes—a Queen,
Mo Chraoibhín Cno!"

CURTAIN.

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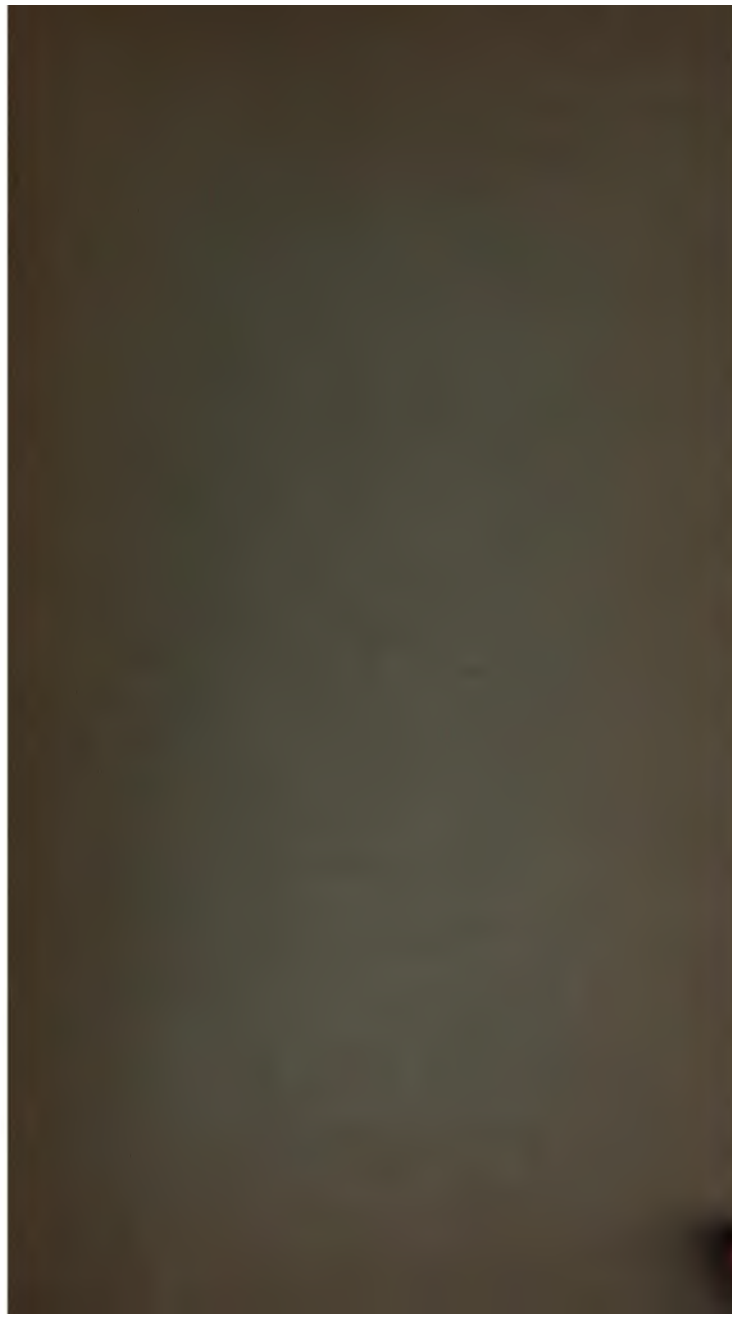

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